

STUDENTS' ERRORS ON THE USE OF SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE IN WRITING DAILY ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

This study was intended to find out the students' simple present tense errors in writing daily activities. The objectives were to find out the types and the dominant types of past tense errors made by the students. In carrying out this study, the first semester students of Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineering Study Program of Tanjungbalai Polytechnic were taken as the population. The data were obtained by using a writing test and were analyzed based on the category of the types of errors. The data analysis showed that the students made errors in using simple present tense. The types of simple present tense errors that they made were *omission of verb, to be, preposition, conjunction, article, phrasal verb, subject and object, addition of unnecessary to be, verb, adverb, and adjective, (substitution) wrong selection of using an appropriate verb, to be, adjective, and preposition, and incorrect ordering. The dominant type of errors was substitution (wrong selection) of using an appropriate verb type which occurred 46 times or 56% out of the whole errors they made.*

Keywords: Writing, Errors

1.1 Background of the Problem

Grammar is one of the language components to support the mastery and development of the four language skills. But in fact, students often find many difficulties in mastering the grammar of English since in their native language they do not find many parts of the grammar that exist in English, such as tenses, the form of the phrase, elliptical construction, question tag, and many others. As Coffin (2003) states that students whose first language is not English often have significant difficulties with some aspects of English grammar that are distinct from the problems that native

English speakers have. In realizing this problem, errors often occur in learning language especially for those non-native speakers of English.

In learning a language, writing is one of the four language skills that should be known. Writing exposes facts and ideas by presenting, explaining or interpreting them in some clear, effective and organized way. It begins when a man learns how to communicate his thoughts and feelings by using conventional system of visible marks.

Writing involves the application of grammar and sentence patterns, vocabulary of diction, and

cross-cultural understanding. In other words, it can be said that writing ability is someone's capability of applying grammar to express his/her idea in the form of written representation. To be able to write a piece of prose, one must be able to write a connected series of sentences which are grammatically and logically linked.

As an essential skill in learning English, writing is part of the English subject. Students should have enough capability to write some kinds of texts such as descriptive, narrative, expository, and argumentative texts. They will need the skills for their future as the part of global society and workers.

Descriptive text, or in terms of writing only known as "description" is one of English lessons that should be mastered not only by junior high school students but also senior high school students, college students and anyone who loves English. According to Kane (2000: 352), description is about sensory experience—how something looks, sounds, tastes. Mostly it is about visual experience, but description also deals with other kinds of perception. The descriptive text is meaningful text that describes the experience related to the senses, such as what shape, sound, taste is. Most descriptive text is about visual experience, but in fact the experience other than the sense of sight, one can also use it to make descriptive text.

Daily activity writing is one example of a descriptive text. This part of writing gives details of the characteristic features of the subject. In describing daily activities, someone explains how he usually does his daily live in written expression. These activities include

eating, dressing, getting into or out of a bed or chair, taking a bath or shower, and using the toilet.

Furthermore, good writing in English requires not only proficiency in vocabulary, punctuations, arrangement of words and sentences or paragraphs but also correct grammar, such as tenses. When writing daily activities, someone typically involve the present simple tense. For that reason, this study aims at finding out simple present tense errors of students in writing daily activities.

1.2 Research Problem

The problems of this research are as follows:

1. What types of past tense errors do the students make when they are writing daily activities?
2. Which type of errors is the most dominant?

1.3 The Objectives of the Research

The objectives of the research are as follows:

1. to find out the types of past tense errors the students make in writing daily activities.
2. to find out the dominant type of simple present tense errors that the students make.

1.4 The Significance of the Research

The result will lead the lecturers of English to teach the students the skill properly or to motivate them to learn the material effectively. It can be said further that an analysis of students' errors gives us evidence of their competence in the process of learning a foreign language. Besides, we gain valuable information which is important in designing the teaching materials.

II. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This research is planned to investigate students' simple present tense errors in writing daily activities. Then the concept of this research must be made clear from the start in order to prevent possible misunderstanding between the writer and the readers about the ideas conveyed.

2.1.1 Errors and Mistakes

In understanding errors we also have to review not only the term errors, but also the term mistakes. If the learner is inclined and able to correct a fault in his or her output, it is assumed that the form he or she selects is not the one intended, and we shall say that the fault is a mistake. If, on other hand, the learner is unable or in any way disinclined to make correction, we assume that the form the learner uses is the one intended, and that it is an error.

We can now refine the definition of error as being an instance of language that is unintentionally deviant and is not self-correctible by its author. A mistake is either intentionally deviant and self-correctible. The error:mistake distinction was introduced into modern debate by Corder (1974) although the distinction, which is marked in other languages too, had been made before. Corder associates errors with failures in competence and mistake with failure in performance. Competence determines grammaticality, while performance determines acceptability. There is a sense in which deviance in grammatically produces errors, while deviance attributed to unacceptability produces mistakes is true. Where the deviance is the

product of the learners' own IL (interlanguage) grammar, and is well-formed in terms of that grammar, we have error; and where the utterances are at odds with their authors' own grammar, leading them to reject the utterances on reflection, since they were not as intended, we have a mistake. If the learners reject their own utterances on the grounds of their ungrammaticality (in terms of the learners' IL grammar), it is grammaticality unacceptable.

2.1.2 Error Analysis

There is a branch of applied linguistics activity that may be used as well as or instead of contrastive analysis, which is usually called "Error Analysis". What has come to be known as error analysis has to do with the investigation of the language of second or foreign language learners.

Richards & Sampson (1974) say: "The fact that learners do make errors and these errors can be observed, analyzed, and classified to reveal something of the system operating within the learner led to surge of study of learners errors, called error analysis". While James (1998) states that Error analysis is the process of determining the incidence nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language.

James (1998) also says that error emerged as reaction to the view of second language learning proposed by contrastive analysis theory, which saw language transfer as the central process involved in second and foreign language learning. Error analysis become distinguished from contrastive analysis by its examination of errors attributable to all possible sources,

not just those which result from negative transfer of the native language. Error analysis easily supersedes contrastive analysis, by discovering that only some of the errors a learner makes are attributable to the mother tongue. Learners do not actually make all the errors that contrastive analysis predicted they should, and learners from different language backgrounds tend to make similar errors in learning one target language.

Corder (1974) says that error analysis has two functions; the first is a theoretical one and the second is a practical one. The theoretical aspect of error analysis is part of the method used in investigating the language learning process. In order to find out the nature of these psychological processes, we have to have a means of describing the student's knowledge of the target language at any particular moment in his learning career in order to relate this knowledge to the teaching he has been receiving. The practical aspect of error analysis is its function in guiding the action. We must take to correct a nonsatisfactory state of affairs for students or teachers.

2.1.2.1 Types of Errors

According to Corder (1974), errors can be classified into four types based on a superficial basis as follows:

1. Addition

It is a phenomenon in which a certain aspect of language rules is added into a correct word order (correct sentence). In other words, some elements are presented which should not be there. For example: Do can they stay here? (Auxiliary do is added)

2. Omission

It is a sentence which one of its aspects (word) is omitted. For example: She has umbrella. (Article an is omitted).

3. Substitution

It is a sentence which one of its aspects (word) is substituted by another. For example: Her hair is different with her sister (The word from is substituted by with).

4. Ordering

It is a sentence, which its order is incorrect (the words are not in right order). The sentence can be right in presented elements, but wrongly sequenced. For examples:

a. We don't know what does he say.

b. Harry said that he needs a pen.

The first sentence is wrongly word order, and the second one is wrongly sequenced of time.

2.1.3 Grammar

In teaching English, the term grammar is still conceived differently among different people. Thornbury (1999) states that grammar is partly the study of what form (or structure) are possible in a language. Traditionally, grammar has been concerned almost exclusively with analysis at the level of the sentence. Thus, a grammar is a description of the rules that govern how a language's sentences are formed. According to Riemsdijk and Williams, the study of grammar is the study of this specialized kind of knowledge how it is constituted, how it is used. In addition to this concept, Musumeci (1997) defines grammar as:

A set of components: phonetics (the production and perception of

sounds), phonology (how sounds are combined), morphology (the study of forms, or how elements are combined to create words), syntax (how words are strong together into sentences), and semantics or meaning. Because all language are characterized by these components, by definition, language does not exist without grammar.

Accordingly, it is clear that grammar has an important and indispensable role in language learning. We understand that grammar is not as simple as we often mean by the term structure in the English curriculum for school. However, grammar has not always been defined in these terms, as used today by many teachers and learners, grammar is understood to be a set of rules that govern language, primarily its morphology and syntax.

2.1.4 Tenses

Tenses tell us how an action relates to the flow of time. There are three main verb tenses in English: *present*, *past* and *future*. The present, past and future tenses are divided into four **aspects**: the *simple*, *progressive*, *perfect* and *perfect progressive*.

There are 12 major verb tenses that English learners should know. English has only two ways of forming a tense from the verb alone: the past and the present. For example, *we drove* and *we drive*. It is difficult to think about time distinctions that do not exist in other language, such as in Indonesian. So, it can take many years for English learners to master verb tenses.

2.1.5 Simple Present Tense

The simple present is a verb tense with two main uses. We use the simple present tense when an action is happening right now, or when it happens regularly (or unceasingly, which is why it's sometimes called present indefinite). Depending on the person, the simple present tense is formed by using the root form or by adding -s or -es to the end.

The other is to talk about habitual actions or occurrences. Someone can start learning simple present tense by stating everything that he does on a regular basis. We use the following rule to the simple present tense:

Subject + Verb1 ...

Examples:

- They get up at 6 am.
- I have my breakfast at 8 am.
- Teddy goes to school by bus.
- We take a short nap in the afternoon.

2.1.6 Writing

Writing as one of the four language skills requires a number of conditions to be mastered. It involves the application of grammatical knowledge, which includes the sentence patterns, vocabulary or diction, and cultural understanding of the target language. Writing is also a creative process, and creativity means making something out of nothing. When students write a composition, for example, they are being creative.

Hartof (1986) states that writing as a means of developing thinking is characterized by the ability to record the factor involved, to classify or otherwise to order them. Moreover, Lindamann (1989) defines writing is a process of

communication which uses a conventional graphic system to convey a message to a reader. Accordingly, it is clear that writing is meant as a process of communication that introduces the symbol to convey the message to the reader clearly and completely. It is also the result of the combination of graphic symbol such as words, phrases, and sentences.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

English is taught as a foreign language in Indonesia and it is difficult for students to learn the language. Writing is considered as the most difficult skill, because it requires the application of grammar, sentence patterns, diction, ideas, organization, spelling, and punctuation. In principle, to write means to try to produce written messages. The use of correct grammar becomes an important skill to improve writing. Good writing in English requires not only proficiency in vocabulary, punctuations, arrangement of words and sentences or paragraphs but also correct grammar such as tenses.

As has been previously mentioned, the students have great difficulties in using grammar such as tenses when writing daily activities. As a result they tend to make simple present tense errors in their writing. Therefore, this research is intended to identify the students' errors on the use of simple present tense in writing daily activities, then to classify the types of errors, and finally to find which type of error is the most dominant.

II. Method of the Research

3.1 Research Design

This research was done by using descriptive quantitative design

that tries to classify, describe, count, take the percentage of the errors, find out the types of errors and decide the dominant one from the data on the students' simple present tense errors in writing daily activities with the reference to the theories previously stated.

3.2 Population

Population, as Gay (1990) states, is the group of people or thing interesting to the researcher, the group s/he would like the result of the study be generalized. According to this, the population of this research is the first semester students of Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineering Study Program in Tanjungbalai Polytechnic were taken as the population. They consist of 11 students.

3.3 The Instrument for Collecting the Data

To collect the data of this research, the students were asked to write their own daily activities. The time should be about 90 minutes. The students were allowed to open their dictionaries but not to look at any reading text. Before they started writing the daily activities, the students were given a brief explanation about daily activities.

3.4 The Technique for Analyzing the Data

After the data is collected, the following steps will be implemented for analyzing the data:

- a. Identifying the students' errors.
- b. Describing the students' errors
- c. Classifying the errors based on the types of the past tense errors.
- d. Counting them
- e. Taking the percentage of the data by using the formula:

$$\frac{X}{Y} \times 100\% = N$$

Where:

X = Number of subcategory error

Y = Total Number of all categories errors

N = The error percentage

- f. Deciding the dominant type of errors that the students make.
- g. Some conclusions are made based on the data analysis

IV. Data and Data Analysis

4.1 Data

The data of this research were based on students' simple present tense errors in writing daily activities. The students were tested on October 26, 2020. They made errors in using simple present tense.

4.2 Data Analysis

4.2.1 Types of Errors

Based on the data, the following is the analysis to find out the types of past tense errors the sample made in writing narrative paragraphs. The category of errors in tenses are divided into four categories, namely; **omissions such as verb, to be, preposition, conjunction, article, phrasal verb, subject and object, additions such as unnecessary to be, verb, adverb, and adjective, substitutions (wrong selection) of using an appropriate verb, to be, adjective, preposition and noun, and incorrect orderings.**

4.2.1.1. Omissions

- a. Omission of verbs

Examples:

<u>Errors</u>	<u>Reconstruction</u>
- After that I ... exercise	- do
- After I ... breakfast	- have

Discussion

In constructing the simple present tense, the sample omitted the verb needed after the subject. Subject must be followed by a verb.

- b. Omission of to be and subject

Example:

<u>Error</u>	<u>Reconstruction</u>
- ... ready to take a bath	- I'm

Discussion

In constructing the simple present tense, 'subject' and 'to be' can not be omitted. But in fact, the sample omitted it. Adjective word must preceded by subject and to be in the sentence.

- c. Omission of preposition

Example:

<u>Error</u>	<u>Reconstruction</u>
- I have breakfast ... seven o'clock	- at

Discussion

In constructing the simple present tense, 'at' can not be omitted before the seven clock.

- d. Omission of Conjunction

Example :

<u>Error</u>	<u>Reconstruction</u>
- waking up I make up my bed	- after

Discussion

In constructing the simple present tense, conjunction is needed before the verb ing. The appropriate conjunction is 'after'.

- e. Omission of Article

Example:

<u>Error</u>	<u>Reconstruction</u>
After that I immediately take ... bath	- a

Discussion

In constructing the simple present tense, article is needed before the noun. The appropriate article is 'a'.

f. Omission of Phrasal Verb

Example:

<u>Error</u>	<u>Reconstruction</u>
- Tidy ... the bed	- up

Discussion

In constructing the simple present tense, phrasal verb is needed to complete it. The appropriate pair of phrasal verb is 'up'.

g. Omission of Object

Example:

<u>Error</u>	<u>Reconstruction</u>
- After finishing ... I usually play online games	-it

Discussion

In constructing the simple present tense, the object is omitted. The object 'it' is needed after the verb ing to complete the sentence.

4.2.1.2. Additions

a. Addition of unnecessary adjective

Example:

<u>Errors</u>	<u>Reconstruction</u>
I see it's <u>new</u> six o'clock	- new (ommitted)

Discussion

From the part of the sentence, "new" is not necessary to be added.

b. Addition of Unnecessary Adverb and Verb

<u>Errors</u>	<u>Reconstruction</u>
- <u>just</u> have <u>had</u> lunch	- just and have (ommitted)

Discussion

From the sentence, 'just' and 'had' are not necessary to construct simple present tense.

are not necessary to construct simple present tense.

c. Addition of Unnecessary Conjunction and Article

<u>Errors</u>	<u>Reconstruction</u>
- <u>And the</u> next I eat	- and , the (ommitted)

Discussion

From the part of the sentence, 'and' and 'the' are not necessary to construct the simple present tense.

d. Addition of unnecessary to be

Example:

<u>Errors</u>	<u>Reconstruction</u>
- until it <u>was</u> finished	- was (ommitted)

4.2.1.3. Substitutions

a. Substitution (wrong selection) Using an Appropriate Verb

Example:

<u>Error</u>	<u>Reconstruction</u>
- I <u>made</u> the bed	- make

Discussion

From the example, the verb 'made' must be changed into 'make' because the time sequence is present time.

b. Substitution (wrong selection) Using an Appropriate To Be and Adjective

Example:

<u>Errors</u>	<u>Reconstruction</u>
- My body <u>was itching</u>	- is - itchy

Discussion

From the example, the to be 'was' must be changed into "is" because the time sequence is present. The adjective 'itching' must be changed into "itchy" because it is the correct word of adjective.

c. Substitution (wrong selection) Using an Appropriate Preposition

Example:

<u>Error</u>	<u>Reconstruction</u>
- And the lunch is <u>on</u> 16.00	- at

Discussion

From the example, the preposition 'on' must be changed into "at" because it is the appropriate preposition to the time.

4.2.1.4. Ordering

a. Incorrect Ordering

Example:

<u>Errors</u>	<u>Reconstruction</u>
- After breakfast I water the plants in front of my house and after I <u>finished</u> watering the plants I <u>played</u> a game	- finish - play

Discussion

It is a sentence, the words are not in right order of simple present tense since the sentence is wrongly sequenced of time.

4.2.2 Dominant Type of Errors

The result of data analysis indicates that the dominant type of past tense errors that the students made in writing daily activities is the wrong selection (substitution) of using an appropriate verb type which occurred 46 times or 56,7 % out of the whole errors they made. This means that the students often make substitution of using an appropriate verb in writing daily activities.

V. Conclusion And Suggestion

5.1 Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the data in the previous chapter, some conclusions are drawn:

1. The first year students of Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Study Program of

Tanjungbalai Polytechnic make errors in using simple present tense in writing daily activities.

2. The types of simple present tense errors are classified into four types, they are:
 - a. Omission of verb (7 errors or 8,6%), to be (1 error or 1,2%), preposition (4 errors or 4,9%), conjunction (1 error or 1,2%), article (1 error or 1,2%), phrasal verb (1 error or 1,2%), subject (4 errors or 4,9%) and object (1 error or 1,2%).
 - b. Addition of adjective (1 error or 1,2%), adverb (1 error or 1,2%), verb (1 error or 1,2%), tobe (1 error or 1,2%), conjunction (1 error or 1,2%), and article (1 error or 1,2%).
 - c. Substitution (wrong selection) of using an appropriate verb (46 errors or 56,7%), adjective (1 error or 1,2%), to be (5 errors or 6,1%), and preposition (1 error or 1,2%).
 - d. Ordering (2 errors or 2,4%).
3. Out of the four types of simple present tense errors, the dominant type that the students make is the substitution namely substitution (wrong selection) of using an appropriate verb type which occurred 46 times or 56,7 %.

5.2 Suggestions

Having seen the results of the research, the following suggestions are made:

1. English lecturers should allocate more time in giving detailed explanations, examples and exercises about how to use simple present tense in writing daily activities.

2. English lecturers should find effective methods to teach the students the skill properly or to motivate them to learn the material effectively.
3. Students should practice in using simple present tense in writing daily activities as frequently as possible to improve their ability.

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